

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE)
VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC)
Executive Committee (EC) Meeting
Wednesday, April 26, 2023 - 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.**

Call to Order: Joseph Dooley, National Representative, United Veterans Services, and Acting EC Chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. He asked for a moment of silence for Mary Morgan, National Representative, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, and EC Chair, whose father had recently passed away.

Invocation: Charles Gallina, Knights of Columbus, provided the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance: John Kleindienst, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), led participants in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Vicki Sarracino, National Representative, Soldiers' Angels, and Acting EC Co-Chair performed the roll call. Executive Committee attendance was duly recorded as follows:

	<u>Present (P)/ Absent (A)</u>	
American Gold Star Mothers	P	
American Legion	P	
American Legion Auxiliary	P	
AMVETS Auxiliary	P	
Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks		A
Disabled American Veterans	P	
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary	P	
Forty and Eight	P	
I.B.P.O Elks of the World, Inc.	P	
Knights of Columbus	P	
Marine Corps League Auxiliary	P	
Military Women Across the Nation		A
National Society Daughters of the American Revolution	P	
Paralyzed Veterans of America	P	
Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc.	P	
Soldiers' Angels	P	
Sons of the American Legion	P	
United Veterans Services	P	
Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary	P	
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.	P	

VA and Other Staff Present:

John P. Brown, AMVETS, President, James H. Parke Memorial Scholarship Board

Jelessa Burney, Program Specialist, Advisory Committee Management Office

(ACMO)

Elizabeth Cazares, Assistant Chief, CDCE, South Texas Veterans Health Care System, San Antonio, TX

Eva M. Gergely, Chief, CDCE, VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System, Aurora, CO

Mitra Gobin, Administrative Officer, VA CDCE, VA Central Office (VACO)

Virginia Hoover, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA CDCE, VACO

Karen O'Neal, Chief, Voluntary Service, Erie VA Medical Center (VAMC), Erie, PA, and Co-Chair, Partnership Subcommittee

Christopher Slawinski, Fleet Reserve Association, and Treasurer, Parke Board

Prince Taylor, Acting Director, VA CDCE, VACO and Designated Federal Officer

Nathan Witt, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA CDCE, VACO

Host Welcome: Ms. Gergely welcomed attendees back to Denver for the second straight year.

77th Annual Meeting Agenda Overview: Ms. Sarracino outlined the meeting's agenda.

Review Goals & Objectives and Fall EC Minutes: Acting Chair Dooley reviewed the goals and objectives for the 77th Annual NAC meeting.

1. Provide the VAVS NAC an opportunity to conduct its business in a manner that assures achievement of all responsibilities mandated by its charter.
2. Provide NAC orientation to new local and national VAVS Representatives and Deputies and CDCE staff.
3. Present to all member organization representatives an overview of current and pending VAVS/CDCE policies and procedures.
4. Foster full and open communication among the member organizations, their representatives, and the VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement staff at VA Central Office and CDCE staff in the field.
5. Provide the NAC member organizations with the educational and training programs designed to share information geared towards improving volunteer programs, with special emphasis on methods to recruit, retain, motivate, and recognize volunteers.
6. Furnish the NAC member organizations the opportunity to hear from VA leadership concerning key issues within the Department of Veterans Affairs.
7. Arrange for the NAC review of, and action on, recommendations.
8. Honor the recipient of the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Award.
9. Recognize the NAC Male Volunteer of the Year & NAC Female Volunteer of the Year.
10. Recognize the recipients of the American Spirit Awards.
11. Recognize the recipients of the VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement Awards.

Mr. Kleindienst made a motion to approve the minutes from the fall 2022 EC meeting. Ron Rolfes, Forty and Eight, and Larry Kelly, Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc. (PHWFF), seconded the motion. The minutes were approved without opposition or abstention.

Subcommittee Reports:

Recommendations: Amy Palmer, Soldiers' Angels, shared the Subcommittee was submitting to the EC three recommendations:

Identification and Tracking of Volunteer Hours - Blinded Veterans Association

The Recommendation is that the VA takes action to program the volunteer portal to allow volunteers to move seamlessly within the VA system, report hours offline and remote, from CBOCs and vet centers, and indicate which VA they are crediting hours to.

Ms. Hoover pointed out that tracking volunteer hours was already possible through the CDCE Portal but admitted that doing so was not easy. She felt that this was something that CDCE could continue to work on and that it did not need to go to the Secretary. Mr. Kleindienst made a motion that the EC not put this recommendation forward. Melvin Brown, American Legion, seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition or abstention. There was a widespread sense that there needs to be more training in this area, and Acting Chair Dooley asked Ms. Palmer to mention that in her report to the full NAC.

Volunteer On-Boarding and Off-Boarding Process - United Veterans Services and PHWFF

The Recommendation is that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs takes action to expedite the On-Boarding and Off-Boarding processes for bringing on new VAVS volunteers and terminating VAVS volunteers who are no longer active.

Mr. Kleindienst made a motion that the EC put this recommendation forward. Patricia Kranzow, American Legion Auxiliary, made a point of order that the EC needed to make a recommendation to move it forward; at the NAC business meeting Ms. Palmer would report that the EC recommended its adoption, after which there would need to be a motion to adopt it. Mr. Kleindienst made a motion to put the recommendation forward to the full NAC. Mr. Kelly seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition or abstention.

Recruitment, Reactivation, and Reintegration of Volunteers Post-COVID - PHWFF and United Veterans Services

The NAC Membership respectfully recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs provide an Information Letter, Information Bulletin, or other form of appropriate communication guidance to Network Directors, Medical Center Directors, and all relevant VHA offices through the Center for Development and Civic Engagement Office advising them to fully support the reactivation and reintegration of CDCE/VAVS volunteers and Veterans Service Organizations full participation in Department of Veterans Affairs volunteer programs.

Acting Chair Dooley said he did not think this went as far as it should, but it was a start. He suggested the Partnership Subcommittee formulate a recommendation that such action be required in directors' performance plans. Sandra Kriebel, Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, made a motion that the EC accept this recommendation as worded. Donna Ray, American Legion Auxiliary, seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition or abstention.

Volunteer of the Year: Mr. Kleindienst reminded members that nominees were judged on five categories, each worth five points:

- Direct contact with Veterans in a hospital, community living center, or outpatient setting
- Adequate supportive documentation
- Working with Veterans in the community and service organizations to improve the lives of Veterans
- Hosting functions for Veterans outside the Lodge, Post, Chapter, etc.
- Additional noteworthy factors

Mr. Kleindienst noted that nominations were due on December 31 each year. He stressed the importance of a strong nomination letter on organization letterhead of less than 500 words, accompanied by strong letters of support. He added that the Subcommittee did not receive many nominations this year. Those that it got were impressive, but it would like to have more.

Recruitment: Mr. Kleindienst reported on volunteer data for fiscal years (FYs) 2021 and 2022 and the first two quarters of fiscal year 2023. From FY2021 to FY2022, there was a decent increase in regularly scheduled (RS) hours and a significant rise in occasional hours. Total volunteer hours were around 3.3 million for the first quarter of FY2022 and a little over one and a half million for the first half of FY2023. The largest numbers of volunteers were in the 65-74 and 75+ age groups.

In 2022, DAV Transportation Network volunteers provided more than 200,000 no cost rides for Veterans to and from their medical appointments. Volunteer drivers donated over 555,000 hours of their time driving a little over 9.2 million miles. DAV currently had 4,409 volunteer drivers across the country and was always looking for volunteers. Volunteer hours had increased by 39 percent from 2021 to 2022, and volunteer drivers' mileage had gone up 26.4 percent.

Membership: Ms. Kriebel welcomed Help Heal Veterans, which was joining NAC as a Donor Member.

The following organizations were being reviewed for NAC membership:

- Homes for Our Troops
- American Coalition for Filipino Veterans
- Operation Appreciation
- Operation Gratitude
- Semper Fi & America's Funds
- Combined Arms Institute
- Freedom Sings

- Platoon 22

The following organizations were removed from the EC effective December 31, 2022:

- Home of the Brave
- Corporation for National and Community Service/AmeriCorps
- Fleet Reserve Association
- National Society Sons of American Revolution

The following organizations had been invited to serve on the EC:

- Paralyzed Veterans of America
- DAV Auxiliary
- Soldiers' Angels
- Forty and Eight

Ms. Kriebel added that, after the Subcommittee completed its personal attendance phone calls, it was evident that training or some kind of orientation was needed to understand the organization and the commitments, obligations, and duties membership entailed. The leadership of member organizations was continuously changing, and obligations needed to be updated on a yearly basis so that new leaders understood what NAC and EC were and what they did.

Partnership: Ms. O'Neal reported on the status of previous recommendations:

2017

- *Train and certify VAVS staff in fingerprinting and PIV badging. Provide equipment and training for VAVS staff to complete the fingerprinting process.* This recommendation was being closed out. It had become obsolete due to the installation and implementation of USAccess.
- *Allow VAVS staff to utilize external applications and manage local VAVS webpages and VAVS Facebook to provide more accurate, timely, and relevant information for individuals interested in serving as volunteers, donors, or strategic partners.* It was reported that this responsibility was only designated to Public Affairs, but CDCE staff are encouraged to engage with Public Affairs to ensure that needs and volunteer opportunities are communicated broadly. The Subcommittee noted this recommendation is also closed.
- *Standardize health screening requirements for volunteer drivers.* Mr. Kleindienst reported that the Subcommittee was working to get this recommendation revised in conjunction with the current motor vehicle operator section of the employee occupational health guidebook.

2018

- No outliers to report

2019

- *Design and implement a new 5,500 hour "Lifetime Secretary, VAVS" award for volunteer recognition.* That award has been included in the regular standard listing of volunteer hours in the CDCE Portal. However, local chiefs have the latitude to design awards as they see fit to best recognize volunteers at their station, so this recommendation is also closed.

2020

- No recommendations submitted

2021

- *Develop and implement a standardized in kind donation value listing.* That has been implemented, uploaded, and integrated into the CDCE Portal.
- *Include VA volunteer drivers in the VA Drug-Free Workplace Program.* Mr. Witt said that CDCE was working in collaboration with additional offices to move forward. The VA policy rewrite had gone back to Veterans Health Administration (VHA) for additional comment. Everything was on track; it is a matter of ensuring cooperating agencies were onboard.

2022

- *Provide an option for our student volunteers (under the age of 18) to receive a photo volunteer USAccess ID badge, or equivalent, to properly identify volunteers in this age cohort. Another component of this recommendation was to explore a path forward that would allow CDCE offices to obtain VA computer access for their youth volunteers.* Ms. Hoover noted that CDCE staff was working with an IT analyst to gather the business requirements for the associated processes.

Mr. Rolfes announced that the Subcommittee had developed a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that included information that was contained within the now rescinded VHA Handbook 1620.01, but not contained in the most recent version of VHA Directive 1620. Mr. Kelly made a motion that the EC recommend adoption of this SOP to the full NAC. Ms. Ray seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition or abstention.

The EC recessed from 10:25 a.m. to 10:38 a.m.

NAC SOP Revision: Patricia Kranzow, American Legion Auxiliary, had no suggestions for updates.

Update for James H. Parke Memorial Fund Board of Directors: John P. Brown lamented that the Recruitment Subcommittee report showed 887 youth volunteers in FY2022, but the Board received 13 scholarship applications this past year. He encouraged EC members to talk to their local chiefs about publicizing the scholarships. This year, the Board had increased the total scholarship money awarded to \$40,000. Mr. Brown announced that there were two spots opening up on the Board, for which

three people had been nominated. He asked members to submit their ballots no later than the Board's luncheon the following day.

Parke Memorial Scholarship Fund Treasurer's Report: Mr. Slawinski shared his personal health journey and praised the staff at Walter Reed for the expert care he received. He reported that the Board's total assets had declined \$131,000 from the previous year, and donations were down \$7,000. He noted that the Board accepted donations throughout the year.

VAVS Partners, Inc. Treasurer's Report: Mr. Kelly reported that income to VAVS Partners totaled \$23,712.45 as of the end of March. There were 259 registrants for the NAC, generating \$25,045 in revenue. VAVS Partners had received over \$8,900 in donations for snacks and coffee at the NAC. Bank charges totaled \$3,883.72, which included \$599 per year in accounting fees and a System for Award Management (SAM) registration required for doing business with the federal government. VAVS Partners made a forward payment of \$9,000 for the NAC, raising total expenses to \$12,883.72, and leaving a net profit of \$7,833.78. Adding the income and expenses to VAVS Partners' balance from the last meeting, \$56,228.41, brings a new balance of \$67,057.14. On its Form 990 EZ IRS e-file Signature Authorization for a Tax Exempt Entity for 2021, VAVS Partners listed \$41,466 in total revenue.

Mr. Kelly requested the authority to discard an old laptop and printer. VAVS Partners also possessed old lanyards from previous NAC meetings. With the EC's permission, Mr. Kelly planned to have Mr. Witt send them to a designated facility where they will be of use. He moved adoption of the VAVS Partners, Inc. financial report. Mr. Gallina seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition or abstention. Without objection, Acting Chair Dooley authorized Mr. Kelly to discard the laptop and printer and transfer the lanyards.

New Business:

CDCE Portal: Ms. Hoover reported that CDCE's contract with GDIT had expired in November and a new development contract with Booz Allen Hamilton had begun in January. Simultaneously, CDCE was gathering requirements for future development. In February, a super user team of VA staff members was assembled. The following month, there was a Hub Release, which included fixes to features of the CDCE Portal including volunteer awards, e-donations, and meal tickets. The focus in March and April was on stabilization efforts. The next System Release was planned for July. Sustainment funding for the application over FY23-24 remained in question. CDCE's request for future development for FY25-29 was also pending.

There are challenges involved with generating reports, inputting data, and viewing dashboards. The process can be frustrating and time-consuming. Only 15 percent of volunteers with a security identification (SecID), and eight percent of total volunteers, have successfully logged in using the Portal. To a large extent, people have simply needed training to get more comfortable using the system. Together with Booz Allen Hamilton, CDCE was working on training programs, as well as exploring ways to

provide more development support, reprioritizing specific features, redesigning the kiosk, and integrating with the VA On/Offboarding System.

Ms. Hoover presented the new volunteer awards dashboard, which had been released in March. Under the new system, eligible awards were populated when volunteers reached a milestone, and the history of all awards granted was now available on each volunteer's record. As noted in the Partnership Subcommittee report, the longstanding volunteer hour awards are prepopulated into the system, but CDCE offices do have the latitude to enter additional awards if they see fit.

Volunteer Data Snapshot: Mr. Witt provided a brief orientation, along with an invitation to work with CDCE on data validation for each respective organization. He noted how the system displayed number of locations served and number of volunteers with a VAVS committee assignment, including those who had not logged time. He offered to work with member organizations to clean up discrepancies. The system also listed the top 25 organizations in regard to number of facilities with certified Representatives and Deputies. Mr. Witt said this information was provided to the EC to help it consider its composition. He reminded members that the VAVS NAC SOP requires that each organization represented on 125 or more local VAVS Committees have a one-year appointment to the EC. Acting Chair Dooley affirmed that the EC is interested in the numbers and will likely discuss them at its October meeting.

CDCE Updates: Mr. Taylor explained that he was serving as CDCE's Acting Director while Dr. Sabrina Clark served in a detail as the Acting Director, Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center, Saginaw, Michigan. He praised the staff for working hard to put together the conference.

Ms. Burney assured the EC that ACMO considers VAVS NAC recommendations a gold standard and shares them with other VA advisory committees as an example of how to write recommendations. After NAC makes a recommendation, it goes to CDCE, who shares a copy with ACMO. At that point, it is considered an unvetted report because it has not received a VA response. The recommendation is also shared with the General Services Administration (GSA), which oversees the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) processes. CDCE places the recommendation in the tracking system, from which it is disseminated to those offices charged with drafting a response on behalf of VA. Once the response is finalized, a report is issued to ACMO, who shares it with VA's congressional liaison office, its intergovernmental office, and the Office of General Counsel. After those offices concur on the report, ACMO sends it to the Secretary's office for review and approval. After the Secretary signs the report, it is forwarded to congressional stakeholders and the President, if necessary.

Mr. Taylor encouraged EC members to meet with local chiefs throughout their VAVS NAC participation, especially those who have never been to the annual gathering. He also asked them to provide feedback to VA on how useful they find the meeting and conference. He stressed the importance of recruiting and retaining volunteers, citing support programs designed to help in that capacity, including the Volunteer Transportation Network primarily supported by the Disabled American Veterans, Compassionate Contact Corps, the VHA Food Security Office, Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations (ATLAS), and Benefits Claims Clinics. Another

priority was staff development. CDCE plans to host professional development events in August, a strategic planning activity for chiefs and a training event for non-chiefs. Several staff members attended the Beryl Institute ELEVATE Patient Experience Conference.

The Secretary and other senior VA leaders made calls to Veterans during National Salute to Veteran Patients Week, and to volunteers during Volunteer Appreciation Week, and were planning to call employees during Public Service Recognition Week. Mr. Taylor hoped these calls will become a regular occurrence.

CDCE has partnered with the Veterans Canteen Service and the Veterans Experience Office to expand donation support for homeless Veterans to all canteens across the country. VA leaders including Mr. Taylor made an appreciation video that was distributed to the field during Volunteer Appreciation Week. The Washington Commanders' Coach Ron Rivera also made an appreciation video. The Secretary has been sending personal letters to surviving World War II Veterans thanking them for their service. A pilot program to make women Veterans feel welcome in the VA was also underway. VA researchers have expressed an interest in evaluating the effectiveness of CDCE programs.

Unfinished Business: Mr. Gobin announced that the EC critique of this year's NAC meeting would be held virtually on May 11. Acting Chair Dooley announced that the next EC meeting was being scheduled for late October at the Washington, DC office of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Ms. Kranzow suggested that Acting Chair Dooley ask for a consent motion approving all the reports submitted at the EC meeting. Hearing no objection, Acting Chair Dooley declared the reports approved.

Ms. Kriebel announced she would be leaving the NAC after the present meeting. She introduced the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary's incoming National Representative, Karlene Beams.

Q&A/Good of the Order/Adjournment: Acting Chair Dooley adjourned the meeting at 11:47 a.m.

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE)
VA Voluntary Service (VAVS)
National Advisory Committee (NAC) Business Session
Thursday, April 27, 2023 - 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.**

Call to Order: Joseph Dooley, National Representative, United Veterans Services, and Acting Executive Committee (EC) Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

Presentation of Colors: Mountain View Young Marines presented the colors.

Pledge of Allegiance: Leonard Huffman, Colorado Elks Association, led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Invocation: Judy Sadler, American Legion Auxiliary, provided the invocation.

Opening Remarks and Meeting Objectives: Mr. Dooley reviewed the agenda for the meeting and asked participants to review the goals and objectives for the 77th Annual NAC Meeting and Conference (see page 2 of the minutes).

Roll Call: Mr. Dooley performed the roll call with the assistance of Vicki Sarracino, Soldiers' Angels. National Advisory Committee attendance was duly recorded as follows:

	<u>Present (P)/ Absent (A)</u>	
Service Member Organizations		
American Gold Star Mothers	P	
American Legion, The	P	
American Legion Auxiliary	P	
American Red Cross	P	
AMVETS	P	
AMVETS Auxiliary	P	
Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks	P	
Blinded Veterans Association	P	
Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.	P	
Disabled American Veterans	P	
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary	P	
Forty and Eight	P	
Jewish War Veterans of the USA	P	
Knights of Columbus	P	
Korean War Veterans Association		A
Marine Corps League		A
Marine Corps League Auxiliary	P	
Masonic Service Association of North America	P	
Military Order of the Cootie	P	
Military Order of the Cootie Auxiliary	P	
Military Order of the Purple Heart Auxiliary	P	
Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc.		A
Military Women Across the Nation		A
National Society Daughters of the American Revolution	P	
National Society Sons of the American Revolution		A
Paralyzed Veterans of America	P	
Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.	P	
Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc.	P	
Salvation Army	P	
Soldiers' Angels	P	
Sons of the American Legion	P	
United Daughters of the Confederacy	P	
United Veterans Services	P	

Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary	P	
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.	P	
Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.		A

Associate Service Member Organizations

AmeriCorps	P	
Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, 1861-1865	P	
Fleet Reserve Association	P	
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.		A
I.B.P.O. Elks of the World, Inc.	P	
Ladies Aux., Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.	P	
National Society United States Daughters of 1812		A
Women's Army Corps Veterans' Association	P	

Donor Member Organizations

Bowlers to Veterans Link (BVL), Inc., The		A
Help Heal Veterans	P	
Veterans Voices Writing Project, Inc.	P	

Strategic Engagement Members

Home of the Brave		A
Student Veterans of America		A
Warrior Rising		A
YMCA of the USA		A

Honorary Members

Ladies Auxiliary of the Fleet Reserve Association	P	
National Ladies Aux., Jewish War Veterans of the USA, Inc.		A
Silver Star Families of America, The		A
Sons of AMVETS	P	
Women Marines Association		A

VA and Other Staff Present:

Elizabeth Cazares, Assistant Chief, CDCE, South Texas Veterans Health Care System, San Antonio, TX

Vicki Eatmon, Voluntary Service Specialist, Western North Carolina VA Health Care System, Asheville, NC

Eva M. Gergely, Chief, CDCE, VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System, Aurora, CO

Mitra Gobin, Administrative Officer, VA CDCE, VACO

Tyrone Green, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA CDCE, VACO

Marcena C. Gunter, Chief, Public Affairs & CDCE, VA St. Louis Health Care System, St. Louis, MO

Virginia Hoover, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA CDCE, VACO

Tabitha Ingram, Chief, Voluntary Service, CDCE, Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center, Indianapolis, IN

Joyce Kuwae, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA Maryland Health Care System, Perry Point, MD

Sanitria McKenzie, Program Specialist, VA CDCE, VACO

Lorraine Mendoza, VISN 19 Communications Service, Creative Consolidated Unit, Eastern Colorado Healthcare System

Carolann Miragliuolo, Senior Advisor, VA CDCE, VACO

Kevin Stanford, Health Systems Specialist, VA CDCE, VACO

Prince Taylor, Acting Director, VA CDCE, VACO and Designated Federal Officer

Wesley Walls, Acting Deputy Director, VA CDCE, VACO

Nathan Witt, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA CDCE, VACO

Subcommittee Reports:

Recommendations: Amy Palmer, Soldiers' Angels, announced the Subcommittee had submitted three recommendations to the Executive Committee (EC). The EC turned one recommendation over to VA CDCE relative to volunteers logging time when not at VA parent medical facility, or when serving at multiple sites. The EC nevertheless felt this was an important issue, and promised to stay engaged on the topic.

Ms. Palmer presented NAC with the two remaining recommendations, which the EC had approved to put forward to a vote at public session:

1. *The NAC Membership respectfully recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs provide an Information Letter, Information Bulletin, or other form of appropriate communication guidance to Network Directors, Medical Center Directors, and all relevant VHA offices through the Center for Development and Civic Engagement Office advising them to fully support the reactivation and reintegration of CDCE/VAVS volunteers and Veterans Service Organizations full participation in Department of Veterans Affairs volunteer programs.* J.P. Brown, AMVETS, made a motion to accept this recommendation. John Kleindienst, DAV, seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition or abstention.
2. *The Recommendation is that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs takes action to expedite the On-Boarding and Off-Boarding processes for bringing on new VAVS volunteers and terminating those no longer active.* Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A., made a motion to accept this recommendation. Ron Rolfes, Forty and Eight seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition or abstention.

Volunteer of the Year: Mr. Dooley reminded attendees that nominations were due on December 31 each year. He encouraged members to submit nominations, adding that the Subcommittee did not receive as many as they would like following the

last call for nominations. Those that were received were impressive, but it would like to have more.

Recruitment: Mr. Kleindienst reported on volunteer data for fiscal years 2021 and 2022 and the first two quarters of fiscal year 2023. There was a decent increase in regularly scheduled (RS) hours and a significant rise in occasional hours. The largest numbers of volunteers were in the 65-74 and 75+ age groups.

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Membership: Sandra Kriebel, Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, welcomed Help Heal Veterans, which joined the VAVS NAC as a Donor Member.

The following organizations were being reviewed for NAC membership:

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Ms. Kriebel added that, after the Subcommittee completed its personal attendance phone calls, it was evident that additional training would help organizations understand the commitments, obligations, and duties that membership entailed. The leadership of member organizations was continuously changing, and obligations needed to be updated on a yearly basis so that new leaders understood what the VAVS NAC and EC are and their function.

Partnership: Ms. O'Neal reported on the status of previous recommendations:

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with an IT analyst to gather the business requirements for the associated processes.

Mr. Rolfes announced that the Subcommittee had developed a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that included information that was contained within the now rescinded VHA Handbook 1620.01, but not contained in the most recent version of VHA Directive 1620. A motion was made to adopt the SOP for placement on the national CDCE SharePoint site to serve as a reference document for all involved parties. AMVETS seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition or abstention.

Standard Operating Procedures: Patricia Kranzow, American Legion Auxiliary, had no suggestions for updates.

There being no objection to the information presented in the subcommittee reports, Mr. Dooley declared them all accepted as written.

Federal Advisory Committee Act 101: Jelessa Burney, Program Specialist, VA Advisory Committee Management Office, explained that the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) is a federal statute that governs the establishment, termination, and management of federal advisory committees (FACs). FAC requirements include:

- A signed and filed charter
- A designated federal officer (DFO)
- Public meetings announced in the Federal Register 15 days in advance, with an agenda
- Balanced membership
- Records maintained and available for public inspection

VAVS NAC is different from other VA FACs in that it has a unique charter. Its membership is composed of Veteran Service Organization (VSO) and other community service organization representatives who speak openly about the value of their organizations. The charter allows organizations to fund VAVS NAC events and activities during the Committee's meeting. Committee members can testify or speak on FAC matters only in their personal capacity. They are expected to clarify that they are providing their personal opinion and not speaking on behalf of the VA or the FAC.

The VAVS NAC recessed from 9:55 a.m. to 10:21 a.m.

VHA Operations Update: Mr. Taylor introduced Michelle Dorsey, M.D., MPH, FACR, FACHE, Deputy Assistant Under Secretary of Health for Operations-Redesign, Veterans Health Administration (VHA), asking her a series of questions:

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself, your vision, your philosophy? Dr. Dorsey said she has only been in her role about four months but had previously spent over a decade at the Phoenix VA, before serving about two years as the chief medical officer at VISN 22, the Desert Pacific Healthcare Network. A radiologist by training, the core of her philosophy is putting Veterans at the center. She was excited to hear firsthand from NAC members.

What roles do you see volunteers and community partners playing to support VHA's strategic goals? Dr. Dorsey noted that, in September, Under Secretary for Health Shereef Elnahal released his six main priorities for VA healthcare: developing access to care, hiring faster and more competitively, taking care of Veterans with environmental exposures, preventing Veteran suicide, higher reliability, and supporting Veterans and their caregivers and survivors with whole health. One of the strategic enablers VHA has identified to help it achieve those goals is leveraging partnerships with VSOs and other stakeholders. Dr. Dorsey sees volunteers as especially instrumental in facilitating access to care, bolstering whole health, providing a community for Veterans, and ultimately helping prevent Veteran suicide.

How are you ensuring that there continues to be a place at the table for volunteers and community partners, and what do you think those organizations should be doing to ensure that their voices are appropriately heard? Dr. Dorsey hoped that her presence at the NAC meeting indicated her commitment to volunteers. She feels they have a powerful story, and one of the ways to tell that story is through data. VHA will continue to invest in its CDCE Portal so it can continue to collect that data. Dr. Dorsey encouraged members to make sure that their teams felt empowered to speak out.

Can you speak to VHA's current efforts to improve hiring practices and decrease burnout? Dr. Dorsey acknowledged that COVID had been a huge strain on VA healthcare providers and volunteers, leading to a wave of resignations and early retirements. She reiterated that hiring faster and more competitively is one of the Under Secretary's six priorities. Having the best staff is essential to providing quality care. There is a major focus in recruitment on timely On-Boarding. VA has a candidate care model which uses human-centered design to make the process easier and more efficient. The key to retention is providing adequate wages and benefits so that employees can focus on taking care of Veterans.

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access (I-DEA): Sabrina C. Clark, Ph.D., Acting Director, Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center, Saginaw, Michigan, presented on VA's I-DEA program. The overarching goal of the program is to foster an environment where everyone's dignity is respected and everyone is able to thrive. There is no demographic or group of people not represented among America's Veterans. For the past two years, CDCE's Task Force for Socially Conscious Civic Engagement has worked to ensure everything CDCE does aligns with the core values of the profession of volunteer management: citizenship, respect, accountability, fairness, and trust. Seemingly small things can make a big shift in helping people feel included. In addition to inclusion, diversity, equity, and access, Dr. Clark proposed that I-DEA can stand for understanding your own Identity, Deciding to pursue the best version of yourself, Exploring what makes you uncomfortable, Accepting your gifts and talents, Acknowledging those of others, and Adopting new ways of thinking.

Advancing Veteran Care Together - An Update from VHA Leadership: Mark Upton, Deputy to the Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration, told the VAVS NAC that he got his start in VA as a volunteer, and expressed VHA's gratitude to volunteers for their contributions. He reiterated the six priorities mentioned by Dr. Dorsey. He outlined a provision in the Veterans COMPACT Act that allows VA to

cover emergent suicide care, as well as some of the associated follow-up or inpatient care, for a much wider subset of Veterans than ever before. The intent of this benefit is to ensure that Veterans in a suicidal crisis know that VA is there for them, and they can get the treatment they need without later being surprised when they receive a bill. Dr. Upton also highlighted the creation of the REBOOT Task Force, which recognizes that burnout is a problem at VHA, as it was elsewhere, and that the agency is dedicated to bolstering employee wellbeing.

The VAVS NAC recessed for the day at 11:50 a.m.

Friday, April 28, 2023 - 1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Call to Order: Mr. Dooley called the meeting back to order at 1:03 p.m.

2023 CDCE Update: Mr. Taylor noted, over the past 10 months, VA CDCE was part of over 500 positive news stories showcased on national media clips. Those stories were the seeds for recruiting future volunteers and donors. One of VHA's goals is to have each eligible Veteran regard the VA system as their provider of choice, and volunteers are crucial to building the necessary trust and long-term relationships. Another VHA objective is to deliver high quality, accessible, and integrated healthcare. Volunteers are vital to augmenting and supporting many of programs such as recreation therapy, Compassionate Contact Corps, and the Volunteer Transportation Network. VA CDCE will continue to be the leader and subject matter expert in building and maintaining relationships with external partners. In the area of internal partnerships, it networks and maintains internal relations to meet the requests and needs of Veterans daily. VA CDCE will continue to expand virtual assignment opportunities that offer greater flexibility for volunteers while continuing to enhance accessibility. There are numerous volunteer opportunities in the realm of whole health. CDCE is bringing its Portal up to date in order to better track and showcase the impact that volunteers make.

Compassionate Contact Corps: Lori Murphy, Senior Social Worker, Chalmers P. Wylie VA Medical Center, reported that studies have consistently showed that about a third of U.S. adults experience chronic loneliness. Loneliness can have a significant effect on health risks and healthcare utilization and can cause premature mortality similar to obesity or smoking. VA's mission is to care for America's Veterans, caregivers, and survivors, so it is imperative to address this issue. In the spring and summer of 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Compassionate Contact Corps (CCC) was rolled out at eight VA facilities, through which volunteers made friendly phone calls to Veterans who were feeling lonely. The program proved popular with Veterans, volunteers, and clinical providers, giving Veterans more regular contact at a time when they desperately needed it. In the fall of 2021, VA's Shark Tank competition identified CCC as one of 16 promising practices out of 350 submissions. At the end of 2022, it was selected for national diffusion. It has now spread to approximately 70 sites, and Ms. Murphy is working with VHA's Diffusion of Excellence to establish it at every facility across VA. Diffusion of Excellence is also funding a study on the clinical impact of CCC.

Office of the Secretary of VA (OSVA) VSO Liaison Update: Kimberly Mitchell, Senior Advisor, VSO Liaison, Office of the Secretary, recounted her personal story as an orphan from Vietnam who was raised in Wisconsin, served in the U.S. Navy for 17 years, and later co-founded the Dixon Center. She was the first female and the first non-combat Vietnam Veteran to be the president and CEO of Veterans Village of San Diego before entering her current position with VA, where she has been for approximately a year. She characterized VA as a giant transformational change project. The Secretary's modus operandi is putting the Veteran at the center of everything VA does. The focus for 2023 is on delivering more care and benefits to more Veterans than ever before. VAVS NAC's members are a critical partner in VA's mission. Working with VSOs and other community partners, VA was able to exceed its goal of getting 38,000 previously homeless Veterans into housing in 2022 and has set the same goal for this year. VA recently revised its mission statement to fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who had served in the nation's military, their families, caregivers, and survivors. 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. Ms. Mitchell recognized those attendees who had served during that conflict. She stressed that there is no greater honor than to wear the cloth of this nation and no greater need to ensure that Veterans, their families, and those who support them have the resources they need to survive and be healthy.

Leadership Panel Discussion: Mr. Dooley asked a series of questions to a panel consisting of Michael T. Kilmer, Director, VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System; Mark Murdock, Director, Dayton VA Medical Center; Ginny Creasman, Director, VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System; and Leigh Anderson, Chief Medical Officer, VA Rocky Mountain Network:

What are your hopes for an improved experience of care?

Kilmer: I think we could do better at how we greet people coming into the facility and how we see them off.

Creasman: Build an atmosphere that is resourced well and staffed by people who want to create a positive experience.

Murdock: I want to see a system that is both personalized and standardized.

Anderson: Work on the telephone centers and other mechanisms to improve overall communication.

What are the top two opportunities for volunteers and community partners to support medical centers and the experience for Veterans?

Anderson: Rethinking how to deliver healthcare and working on whole health.

Creasman: Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) outreach and developing technology skills.

Murdock: Patient satisfaction and employee satisfaction.

Kilmer: Addressing social isolation and food insecurity.

What keeps you up at night?

Anderson: People are leaving healthcare.

Creasman: Incivility in the workplace.

Kilmer: Assault from patients on healthcare staff.

Murdock: Finding the sweet spot between what we do in the VA and what we use our community partners for.

What is your call to action to improve the care experience?

Murdock: Continue to lead with our ICARE [integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect, and excellence] values.

Creasman: We need folks who are willing to be peer support to reach out to our Veterans.

Kilmer: Expand our focus on dealing with health equity issues.

Anderson: Break down the barriers from one site to another.

What's your vision for volunteers, donors, and community partners within the VA and VHA strategic plans and framework for the future?

Creasman: It takes all of us hearing each other to meet the needs of our Veterans.

Anderson: Volunteers and VSOs give to the rest of the community the importance of what it is to be a Veteran.

Kilmer: We need to bridge the gap between Veterans and non-Veterans and between generations.

Murdock: We need specific guidance from leadership on how we grow our voluntary services programs.

The VAVS NAC recessed from 3:06 p.m. to 3:21 p.m.

Whole Health Update: Benjamin Kligler, Executive Director, Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation, explained the purpose of VA Whole Health: to go beyond "what is the matter with you" and focusing on "what matters to you." It puts front and center the words "empower" and "equip." Veterans participating in the program have a conversation with either a whole health coach or a fellow Veteran trained as a peer facilitator to talk about what matters to them. The wellbeing program equips Veterans with the tools they need to meet their personal goals. With Whole Health clinical care, primary care docs provide Veterans with the medical care they needed while paying attention to their overarching objectives. This initiative is mentioned specifically in the VA Strategic Plan, and whole health is one of VHA Under Secretary Elnahal's six priorities. In fiscal year 2022, about 16 percent of Veterans actively receiving care in VHA were participating in Whole Health. Dr. Kligler encouraged VAVS NAC member organizations to spread the word about this program.

Award Presentations: Mr. Dooley and Mr. Taylor presented the awards as follows:

NAC Female Volunteer of the Year: **Cynthia Davis**, Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, Baltimore VA Medical Center

NAC Male Volunteer of the Year: **Brian Kinney**, Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks, Lexington VA Medical Center

American Spirit Awards

Student Recruitment: **General Medicine Clinic Hypertension Program**, VA
Palo Alto Health Care System

Community Organization Recruitment: **Freedom Ride**, James E. Van Zandt VA
Medical Center

CDCE Executive Leadership Award: **Mark Murdock**, Dayton VA Medical Center

Host Site Service Award: **Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center**

Service Leadership Award: **Mary Morgan**, Benevolent and Protective Order of
Elks

78th Annual NAC Host Site Presentation: Tammy Finney, Chief, Community Relations and Engagement, Columbia VA Health Care System gave a brief presentation on the next NAC meeting, which will be held in Columbia, South Carolina.

Closing Remarks: Mr. Dooley adjourned the meeting at 4:21 p.m.

Sabrina C. Clark, Ph.D.
Director, VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement
Designated Federal Officer, VA Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee